

Diego Rivera



1886-1957 | MEXICAN

Vendedora

M.S. Rau
FINE ART • ANTIQUES • JEWELS

Diego Rivera stands among the most important artists of the 20th century, defying the conventions of traditional painting. This exceptional watercolor, painted by Rivera in 1937, represents a masterwork within an important part of the artist’s output—his portraits of indigenous vendors. Focusing on a lone woman holding a woven bag, *Vendedora* explores the dichotomy between the nobility of her trade and the austerity of life in rural Mexico. These sensitive depictions of individuals from Mexico’s working classes are some of the best of his oeuvre.

The woman sits peacefully at the center of this composition with her hands neatly crossed over her wares. A glowing yellow hue frames her head, suggesting a kind of reverence with an almost halo-like form. Rivera often chose laborers as the subjects of his portraits for the pivotal social role that they represented. His hardworking subjects had formed the nation’s backbone for centuries, and it was they who had much to gain from the improved social climate following the Revolution of 1910 and the end of Porfirio Diaz’s dictatorship. With her solemn expression, the vendor conveys a sense of integrity and pride in her work, while a bold color palette and rich tapestry of textures bring the composition to life.

The work was created in 1937 while Rivera was living with Frida Kahlo in Mexico City. He had returned to his home country just a few years before, after a four-year sojourn in the United States. There is an intense luminosity in the palette of Rivera’s works from this period that is hardly seen in the paintings of his French and American contemporaries, for it was inspired by the light of the Mexican landscape and by colorful, traditional Mexican costumes. The present painting reflects this cultural identity and his compassion for the people of his homeland.

Born in Guanajuato City, Mexico, in 1886, Diego Rivera showed a talent for drawing at a very young

age. He moved to Paris in 1907 to live and work with the great gathering of artists in Montparnasse. There, he was exposed to the burgeoning of Cubism, and his work fully embraced this new school of thought. In 1921, Rivera returned to Mexico, where he undertook government-sponsored murals that reflected his communist politics in historical contexts. Aside from the often controversial reactions they received, these works focused on the working-class “everyman” of Mexico and reflected the folk ideals that were familiar and respected within the native community.

Rivera’s works are beloved worldwide, but especially so in his native Mexico, where they have become cornerstones of national identity. As such, in 1964, the Mexican government established export regulations to protect his artworks and keep them in the country, designating them as “artistic monuments.” Thus, finding examples of this master’s works outside of Mexico is quite difficult. Rivera’s works also belong to major collections across the globe, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.





Diego Rivera

1886-1957 | Mexican

Vendedora, 1937

Signed and dated "Diego Rivera 37" (lower right)
Watercolor on rice paper

Paper: 15" high x 11" wide | 38.10 x 27.94 cm
Frame: 26 ⁷/₈" high x 22 ¹/₂" wide x 2" deep | 68.26 x 57.15 x 5.08 cm

PROVENANCE

Mary E. Johnston, Glendale, Ohio

Gift from the above, 1973

Private Collection, CO

Private Collection, NY

M.S. Rau, New Orleans

EXHIBITED

Cincinnati, Ohio, Contemporary Arts Center, *The Mary E. Johnston Collection*, April 20 – May 12, 1956



AUCTION COMPARABLES



Diego Rivera
Niña sentada con flores
watercolor on paper laid on paper
Height 60 x Width 48.3 cm.
Height 23.622 x Width 19.016 in.
1949

15 May 2019 *over 5 years ago*
Christie's New York
Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale – [Lot 0011B]
est. 150,000 - 250,000 USD **375,000 USD** (P)
↑ 50% est



Diego Rivera
Mujer con lirios de perfil
pastel and charcoal on paper
Height 47.6 x Width 62.5 cm.
Height 18.74 x Width 24.606 in.
1938

14 November 2023 *about 1 year ago*
Sotheby's New York
Modern Day Auction – [Lot 00175]
est. 350,000 - 450,000 USD **317,500 USD** (P)



Diego Rivera
Cargando alcatraces (Tres mujeres, una sentada)
watercolor on rice paper
Height 27.9 x Width 38.1 cm.
Height 10.984 x Width 15 in.
1940

20 November 2015 *about 9 years ago*
Christie's New York
Latin American Art – [Lot 00009]
est. 100,000 - 150,000 USD **293,000 USD** (P)
↑ 95% est



Diego Rivera
El curandero
watercolor
Height 47.5 x Width 61.5 cm.
Height 18.701 x Width 24.213 in.
1948

23 May 2006 *over 18 years ago*
Christie's New York
Latin American Art – [Lot 00012]
est. 120,000 - 160,000 USD **284,800 USD** (P)
↑ 78% est



Diego Rivera
Cargador de flores andando (El vendedor de gladiolas y hortensias)
watercolor on rice paper
Height 38.4 x Width 27.7 cm.
Height 15.118 x Width 10.906 in.
1954

11 March 2022 *almost 3 years ago*
Christie's New York
Latin American Art – [Lot 00003]
est. 100,000 - 150,000 USD **239,400 USD** (P)
↑ 60% est



Diego Rivera | *Three Figures*

1936

Medium: Ink and watercolor on paper

Dimensions: 15 x 10^{3/4} inches | 38.1 x 27.31 cm



SFMO
MA

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
San Francisco, CA, United States



Diego Rivera | *Vendedora de flores*

1954

Medium: Watercolor on paper

Dimensions: 15^{3/8} x 11 inches | 39.1 x 27.9 cm



Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles, CA, United States



Diego Rivera | *Dos vendedoras*

Circa 1930

Medium: Watercolor on handmade paper

Dimensions: 11 x 15^{1/8} inches | 27.9 x 38.4 cm



Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles, CA, United States



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